

critical digest



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This Week in NYC

A new Off Broadway enterprise made ready to open in late Jun in Greenwich Village sponsored by Lee Paton, former producer of Sullivan St Playhouse. "New Playwrights Theatre" to be located at Thompson St & West Third St, the site of the former "La Jolie" night-club, Paton will construct two small theatres, both devoted to the development of new American playwrights. The rear 100 seat theatre will debut the week of Jun 20 with a triple bill of new short American plays--West of the Moon and Hector, both by Robert Hector and The Blood Bugle by Harry Tierney, Jr. Paton will also direct the bill. In the front of the building "New Playwrights Rectangle" arena theatre will be constructed, also seating 100. Here playwrights, authors, directors and actors will present a combination of dramatizations, stage readings, and discussion programs. Presentations may be given before or after the program in the "Theatre."

Plays

Critic's Choice closed after 189 performances... Becket closed on schedule after limited run... A Call on Kuprin first NYC preview was cancelled after the first act due to a backstage accident of the heavy scenery... The Happiest Girl in the World started its three matinee a week schedule--Wed, Thur, Sat--and is considering adding a fourth-Fri... Shalom musical moved debut from Dec 18 to Oct 10, Albert Marre director. Thus Helen of Troy musical also to be staged by Marre switched back to Dec... Barnum musical presented by Alex Cohen Feb 22, 1962 to have book and lyrics by newcomers Raymond Jessel and Marian Grudeff.

Players

Lucille Ball returned to Wildcat after missing week-end performances due to throat ailment, standby Betty Jane Watson subbed at 45 minutes notice without any rehearsals... Ray Kellogg to sub for Keith Andes, Wildcat Jun 26-Jul 1 while latter is in Hollywood for "The Music Man" film... Grace George, 81, died.

NYC Calendar

Pal Joey- City Center 5/31. NYC Center Light Opera Co presents limited three week revival of Richard Rodgers-Lorenz Hart-John O'Hara musical with Bob Fosse, Carol Bruce, Eileen Heckart, Sheila Bond, directed by Gus Shimer, Jr. First presented Dec 25, 1950 for 374 performances, Apr 18, 1953 revival ran 542 performances.

Noontime-Theatre Marquee-(110 E 59)- 6/1. Mary Jordan- Sam Silverberg present Howard Hart's adaptation of Paul Claudel's French drama, directed by Paul Davis with Tani Seitz, Michael Wager.

Diakos-Fashion Inst. Playhouse (226 W 27) 6/2- 6/4. Lemos Theatrical Company of Athens present modern Greek play by Soteris Patatzis. Simultaneous translation by transistor radios available.

Broadway Business

Variety reports business as generally down. Sell-outs - Becket, Camelot, Carnival, Mary Mary, Sound of Music. Five shows on twofers.

Drama Desk

Gore Vidal named drama critic of "Partisan Review."

Theatre TV Notes

Rain with Marilyn Monroe now scheduled to be taped by NBC in Jul for fall telecast... Lullaby play by Don Appel to be basis for a new TV series with Eli Wallach and Anne Jackson... Young Abe Lincoln to be shown on Jun 7 on WNEW (NY).

Theatre Book Notes

"The History of the Greek and Roman Theatre" by Margarete Bieber (Princeton Univ \$17.50) is a revised, enlarged edition of the 1939 work... "Theatre Language: A Dictionary of Terms in English of Drama and Stage from Medieval to Modern Times" published by Theatre Arts Books (\$6.95).

Off Broadway

The Living Theatre closed its repertory program prior to European tour and plan to re-open in Oct with The Apple by Jack Gelber... A Worm in the Horseradish closed after 89 performances, will tour the summer circuit and plans to return to Off Broadway in Sept... Krapp's Last Tape and The Zoo Story twin-bill moved from Cricket to Provincetown with Harry Joe Brown, Jr now sole producer... The Premise moved back to its air-conditioned theatre at 154 Bleecker St after a three month battle to win the proper license. For the past four weeks it had been playing at Village Gate, 185 Thompson St... David Atkinson replaced Charles Rydell, Three Penny Opera, which lists Jun 25 as a tentative closing date.

A Fig Leaf in Her Bonnet a new comedy by Jesse Torn about GBS and Mrs Patrick Campbell due Jun 5 at Gramercy Arts... American Savoyards extended Gilbert & Sullivan repertory at Greenwich Mews to Jul 9... The Red Eye of Love a new comedy by Arnold Weinstein, Rutgers Univ instructor, to be presented Jun 13 at Living Theatre, directed by John Wulp.

Legal Dept

20% wage increase and producer and theatre owner contributions toward pensions sought by stagehands in new contract. Present three year contract expires Jul 31.

Yiddish Theatre

Yiddish Theatre of Second Ave will move uptown to Mayfair next season starting Oct 30 with Go Fight City Hall, presented by Irving Jacobson and Julius Adler.

NY World's Fair

\$600,000 musical spectacle will be presented in 1964 in Flushing Amphitheatre by Meyer Davis - Leon Leondioff-Thomus Rudel.

Play Diary

Next Week: A Fig Leaf in Her Bonnet. -Gramercy Arts 6/5

DIGESTS OF CURRENT NYC THEATRE REVIEWS

Donnybrook! - 46th St 5/18. 5 pro- and 2 con- Mirror, Post- filed on new musical with book by Robert McEnroe, music and lyrics by Johnny Burke, based on "The Quiet Man" film and story by Maurice Walsh, presented by Fred Herbert-David Kapp, directed by Jack Cole with Eddie Foy, Susan Johnson, Art Lund, Joan Fagin. Affirmative voters expressed mild approval for cast, songs and charm, all of which they felt overcame dull book, while negative voters panned book. Taubman, Times, enjoyed ingratiating musical which moves with style, grace and jabs its way smoothly under your guard. Warm and witty staging, airy songs complimented by Times man. Kerr, Herald Tribune, admitted that inspite of every - thing that is dawdling some charming things occur along the easy way to Erin, the evening ends wearing a bland and kindly homespun grin. Chapman, News, liked cheerful, picturesque affair at its funniest and best when Foy gets tangled up in himself; dances picked as best since "West Side Story," and songs easy and friendly. McClain, Journal American, recommended chipper cast, some merry and haunting tunes, a fair rasher of dance and comedy and enough of a yarn to hold the proceedings together. Aston, World Telegram & Sun, applauded good book, solid score, glittering array of principles inspired by Foy. WTS aisle-sitter enjoyed first act better than second. Dissenter Coleman, Mirror, panned everything--the book for too little humor and true characterization, the songs for sounding pretty much alike, the direction for having more vigor than substance. Watts, Post, condemned flat tale about tedious, stereotyped characters, curiously bent on making good case for viewpoint expressed in show's song "I Could Hate the Lovable Irish." He did okay agreeable score and cast members.

Mandingo - Lyceum 5/22. 1 pro- News- and 6 con- filed on new play by Jack Kirkland adapted from Kyle Onstott's novel, presented by Billy Baxter-Edward Fried - man, staged by Louis Macmillian with Franchot Tone, Brooke Hayward, Georgia Burke, Vinie Burrows. Sole pro voter Chapman, News, recommended rough, rugged and rousing melodrama with tingling direction and splendid performances. The rest of the critics panned script while most excused actors. Taubman, Times, attacked crude, sentimental effort to capitalize on newsworthy racial theme with stereotyped characters taking part in noisome affair; he sympathized with actors. Kerr, Herald Tribune, summed it as dreadful, but not dull, adaptation like "10 Nights at A Stud Farm". Hayward does not yet phrase or project on a Broadway scale, Herald Tribune man listed. Coleman, Mirror, vetoed lurid melodrama with cheap theatricality; reviewer wondered how Tone got trapped in such a vehicle. Watts, Post, felt play was well-acted, but its lurid melodramatics keep it from being either convincing or moving. McClain, Journal American, also complimented cast for good performances but feared that however raw and searing it was supposed to be, he was on the virge of gibbles. Aston, World Telegram & Sun, marked it weirdly wallowing melodrama.

Princess Ida - Greenwich Mews (141 W 13) 5/18. 5 pro- Times, Herald Tribune, Mirror, Journal American, World Telegram & Sun- filed on American Savoyards production of lesser Gilbert & Sullivan operetta. Calta, okayed pleasant musical merriment. Morgenstern, Herald Tribune, advised that for musical delights, comedy and education in how to run a proper girls' school it should not be missed. Ober, Mirror, Lapole, Journal American, Saffron, WTS, recommended week-end production of G & S work.

DRAMATISTS
GUILD
VOTE

Dramatists Guild voted in favor of royalty cuts during the first weeks of a production run to help pay off the investors more quickly, and ultimately to help bring down the cost of the price of theatre tickets. Concessions voted at Sherry Netherland Hotel meeting are contingent on the acceptance of similar cuts by star performers, directors, choreographers and producers.

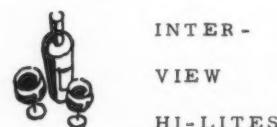
Guild statement following three hour session approving the one year test hoped that the move would help to alleviate the economic plight of the theatre and prove to be the first step in the direction of reducing box-office prices. Writers union also explained that the step was taken in the hope that all the craft unions of the theatre as well as the theatre owners will ultimately make equal concessions so that the public can be the benefactor.

Concessions call for playwright to take 1/2 of his royalty for the first 17 weeks of production, with a minimum of 5% of the weekly gross. After investors paid back, the author will get his full royalty. Plan would only go into effect when similar decreases accepted by director, cast and producer for the same period.



THEATRE
RECORD
COMMENTS

Carnival original cast album (MGM) panned by Watt, News. Though facts seem to be that the new show is a triumph of production values over material, the major values of it does not get onto the record. Not only is the score often amateurish, sounding here like a kiddies show and there like a second rate Off Broadway musical re-arranged for records, but the performances itself leaves much to be desired. News music critic thought only solo voices of any consequence were Anna Maria Alberghetti and Kaye Ballard.



INTER -
VIEW
HI-LITES

Laurence Feldman, co-producer of Westport, Conn, Country Playhouse, believes Broadway producers should consider interrupting the current NY runs of their weaker shows at this point in the season and send them directly out in summer stock, he told Little, Herald Tribune. If they make up their minds early enough, they could keep their shows together and probably wind up with a profit instead of a loss. Why try to buck the summer in NY on twofers when they can play 10 weeks in summer stock and probably gross \$250,000.

Tom Bosley, Fiorello!, suggests free newspaper theatre listings and followup reviews by second string critics on Broadway shows as two new ideas to help the economic side of theatre, he told Aston, World Telegram & Sun.



GREEN
ROOM
DEPARTMENT

LEGIT EXPENSE ACCOUNTS... Congressional hearing considering the effect of expense account business on NY theatres and restaurants heard widely diverse views. Restaurant owner Vincent Sardi, Jr told the House Ways and Means Committee that curtailing theatre tickets and other entertainment as legitimate business expenses would ruin the theatre and make Broadway look like a distressed area. Accountant-play investor J. S. Seidman told the Washington lawmakers that banning tickets from expense accounts would actually make things better. He believes public interest in theatre would increase if the good seats were available and not all gobbled up by carefree tax-deductible spenders. David Merrick is anxious to refute Seidman's testimony, reports Lyons, Post. Producer thinks such a curb would wreck the theatre.

REVIEWERS AT WORK... A way of acquiring regard for local play reviewers is to read the work of their London colleagues, suggests Watts, Post.

FOUR POINT PLAN... Program for saving the Fabulous Invalid detailed by Coleman, Mirror, includes--
1. Establishment of an effective committee to cut production costs...2. A Madison Ave type sales campaign to develop audiences...3. Founding of a Theatre Hall of Fame to publicize the drama's glamorous history...4. Cut rate tickets for students and children.

CRITICAL THOUGHTS... The most important thing about the NY production of The Blacks to Lerner, Post, is that it was produced at all in a culture whos stated ideal is that decency is color-blind... Taubman, Times, finds it difficult to understand why Alley Theatre, Houston, and Actors Workshop, San Francisco, do not get the unstinting support and facilities their companies have bravely earned.

GOOD SEASON... 1960-61 had some good, exciting and rewarding plays and musicals this season, sums Chapman, News. Though there may not have been any "great" dramas, theatre fans have not been artistic paupers. During the year we were exposed to very little which never should have opened if the authors had any sense, or which should have been stoned out of the theatre as witless and tasteless. Next year could be better, of course.

DRAMA MAIL BOX... Journal American reader backs up charge of Kilgallen that Donnybrook! was a tasteless attack on the Irish with a charge that Mandingo is incredibly offensive to ALL Americans. Negro reader noted shock of such tasteless, vulgar and downright filthy writing frozen on faces of the audience. ... Herald Tribune reader urges printed notices to inform audience of cast changes rather than stage manager announcing switch in characters prior to start of show.

RUNNING HAMLET... Phoenix' Hamlet is supposed to close again after another week, but it probably won't, correctly predicted Kerr, Herald Tribune. Reviewer's reason was that he thinks every time the management decides to call a halt, it fails in its discouraging purpose for the simple reason that it cannot catch the actors to tell them. They're still running around that castle someplace, and so another week is added.



PROS & CONS BY TMK

Donnybrook! is an entertaining, slick musical featuring melodic tunes, a superbly trained dance company and a rather charming cast divided between new and old faces. Neither the Irish-type book nor the sometimes Irish accents are taken seriously by the cast, yet they provide ample excuse for a variety of charming songs and dances. If the book is not exactly a classic at least it isn't insulting. Evening might have been quieter if Philip Bosco was not required to shout his way through the proceedings. Next show round the book writer fortunate enough to have both Eddie Foy and Susan Johnson in his cast should give them twice as many song-dance numbers as they now have.

* * *

Mandingo is basically a very bad, dirty play, and a fraud at that. Supposedly a documentary of 1832 slave conditions in Alabama, it is really a sensational catalog of inhuman details paraded by a set of stereotype characters, Negro and white. That most of the roles are poorly acted is a tribute to the good taste of the actors. They have had to accept the roles offered, but they did not have to give their hearts to such shallow garbage.

* * *

Meet Peter Grant is at best a puzzle in which the hardy audience members should be given a prize if they can discover what connection it has with "Peer Gynt" from which the program claims it was adapted. Construction of the script and presentation is on the amateur level, the staging and choreography are nil. Though few actors are present in the large cast Chet Sommers, Paula Coonen and Tobi Reynolds presented pretty voices. This should be the final modern adaptation of "Peer Gynt" allowed on any stage, but a Irish version is due to be presented in Sept at the Dublin Festival. Beware!

* * *

Sell-out matinees featuring ticket prices cut as much as half of the evening price scale prompted one producer to test three matinees per week instead of the traditional two. Understandably anxious, he announced plans for a fourth matinee per week, Equity and the craft unions willing. Changes are that they won't be willing. But this is still another example of the "Non-Committee" approach to current theatre production. Instead of joining diverse groups arguing for tax abatement to help pay union pension funds, another producer has devoted his energies to selling tickets at lower prices.

* * *

Playwrights by reputation and necessity are the true dreamers of the theatre. So it should not come as a surprise that they were willing to vote a cut in their own royalties during the first weeks of production to help pay off the investors more quickly. Possibly stars also will take huge cuts to get their production in the profit columns. But even the most idealistic theatre buff born might doubt that certain of the craft unions would accept such a cut ever.

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The world's most captive audience will be the viewers of new films on TWA jet planes coast to coast. Though they will not have to use the earphones, there will literally be no place to hide from the technicolor pictures. A coast to coast jet flight would be the proper length for a short play with live actors working their way across the country the modern way.



OUTER
BROADWAY
THEATRE
LETTER

College Theatre

Brigham Young Univ, Provo, Utah summer session Jun 19-23 to feature The Dybbuk production designed and directed by Mordecai Gor elik, and also the inauguration of the new arena theatre... Univ of Minn Showboat to present Bloomer Girl Jun 13-Aug 27 at Mississippi River stops... William Saroyan to teach a term at Purdue Univ, Lafayette, Ind ... Dr Frank Baxter, Univ of South ern Calif and "Shakespeare on TV" commentator, retired.

AETA

Panels scheduled for AETA NYC confab Aug 24-30 include-Acting-Hal Holbrook, Fred O'Neal, Peggy Wood...Direction-Harold Clurman, Jose Quintero, Shepard Traube.

Community Theatres

Theatre of Western Springs, Illinois, dedicated new \$250, 000 417 seat playhouse with production of Dark of the Moon.

Spring Repertory

Milwaukee Music Hall Theatre to be constructed with city funds may house a new repertory company directed by Margaret Webster with William Ball assistant.

New Theatres

Fisher Theatre, Detroit, to debut Oct with tryout of The Gay Life Playhouse on first floor of new Fisher Building cost \$2 million and will seat 1608 for dramas and 2081 for musicals.

Contests

\$1000 first prize and an Off Broadway production to be presented in contest for best new play with "a message" sponsored by J. I. Rodale. Second and third prizes of \$300 and \$200 will also receive an Equity Off Broadway production. Entries must be mailed to Play Contest, 155 W 46, NYC by Jan 1, 1962.

Summer Playhouses

Philadelphia's Playhouse-in-the Park renamed "John B Kelly Playhouse" in honor of late president of Fairmount Park Commission, his daughter Princess Grace of Monaco, unveiled Reggie Beauchamp bust. Sea son opens May 29 with Show Girl ... Holiday Players, Manawa, Wisc, open first season Jun 20, Richard Goldsmith producer.

Elitch Gardens, Denver, opens 70th season Jun 19 with The Pleasure of His Company with Fayne Blackburn and Stephen Elliott, directed by Windsor Lewis... Tappan Zee Playhouse, Nyack, NY opens fourth season Jun 29 ... Carousel Music Fair, Framingham, Mass starts fourth season Jun 12 with Danny Kaye Revue... Northland Playhouse, Detroit opens Jun 8 with Bell Book and Candle starring Ginger Rogers... Mountain Playhouse, Mt Royal, Montreal, debuts 12th season May 29 with Breath of Spring by Peter Cook.

Add summer packages prepared by COST (Council of Stock Theatres)---Marriage Go Round with Myrna Loy and Claude Dauphin ... Invitation to a March with Celeste Holm... Period of Adjustment with Dane Clark... A Majority of One with Herbert Marshall... O Mistress Mine with Jane Wyatt... The Pleasure of His Company with Faye Emerson.

Road Shows

Under Milkwood with Alan Napier to open in Los Angeles Jun 6 ... The Fantasticks moving from Chicago's Del Prado Hotel to Conrad Hilton Boulevard Room in Jul, Richard Alan Woody producer ... Second City Players, Chicago cabaret theatre production, to open with original cast at Ivar Theatre, Los Angeles in Jun with a new cast continuing in Chicago.

London

The One Day of the Year Australian hit play by Alan Seymour to be presented next season by Laurence Olivier Productions... The Bad Soldier Smith a new play by William Douglas Home due Jun 14 at Westminster... The Sound of Music drew mixed reviews with approval of Jean Bayless in the lead, some of the music and Jerome White's direction, but panning of the book as cloyingly oversentimental.

US Repertory

Living Theatre Repertory tour opens Jun 12 in Rome with The Connection, Many Loves and In the Jungle of Cities. Stops include --Turin, Milan, Paris, Glasgow, Frankfurt, Hamburg, West Berlin. Plans for a two week run in London in Jul and a one week run in Warsaw in Aug are still being considered.

Theatre Guild American Repertory Company productions in Stockholm played to audience and critical approval for The Skin of Our Teeth and The Glass Menagerie. But The Miracle Worker played to diverse reviews and smaller houses, partly due to current run of the play there.

Latin America

Three Japanese Plays program staged Off Broadway this winter by Herbert Machiz to be staged by him in Brazil under Rockefeller Foundation grant. Productions in Portuguese start tour Jul 10 in Salvador.

Ester Sandoval Theatrical Co to tour Puerto Rico with Spanish versions of modern play, using La Perla Theatre, Ponce has home base, Nilo Cintron producer. The Fourposter opens program Jun 17.

Dublin Festival

Passions of Ginty, a modern version of "Peer Gynt" in an Irish setting by Hugh Leonard, to be presented.

Shakespeare

Richard III with Christopher Plummer, directed by William Gaskill opened at Stratford-on-Avon to unanimous critical raves... Romeo and Juliet with Dorothy Tutin, Edith Evans and Zia Mohyeddin, the young Pakistani actor from last season's A Passage to India to be presented at Stratford-on-Avon Aug 15, staged by Peter Hall.



"CD" digests all theatre material in the 2100 pages of 7 NY daily papers of the preceding week. "CD" subscribers are invited to inquire further for more specific data on current reviews, back reviews and out-of-town tryout reviews via mail, phone or drop by for coffee and facts when in NYC.

